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# THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE

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## A PROFESSIONAL READING COURSE ON THE EDUCATIONAL WORK OF THE CHURCH. IV

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Perhaps the most important fact to realize in religious education is that we are dealing with a developing being. It is a common remark that certain parents or teachers seem to forget that they ever were young, and it is literally true that to a degree we all forget that we were young. We are not only larger and older, but we are different from what we were as children and as youth. We have changed structurally and the change has taken place so gradually that we are not clearly conscious of it. The bane of education has been that elders fail to recognize the different capacity, structure, and point of view of the younger. Hence the cardinal importance of a scientific understanding of human development.

An excellent book for this purpose is Kirkpatrick's *Fundamentals of Child Study*. His method of treatment is indicated in the subtitle, "A Discussion of Instincts and Other Factors in Human Development with Practical Applications." This takes us again, as in the educational works already studied, to the subject of instinct, but the treatment is much fuller, and is genetic; that is to say, it is concerned with the consideration of the time at which each

instinct is naturally most prominent and with the changes in the expression of the instinct which are produced by age and which may be produced by education.

The first group of instincts is the individualistic—those concerned with self-preservation. Kirkpatrick calls attention to the proper place which these inevitably have in human development. Perhaps this is especially important as a warning to the religious educator. We are so much concerned with the development of a fine unselfishness that we may easily seek to produce it too soon. It may be a question whether our author is correct in regarding the child before puberty as so entirely under the control of the individualistic instincts. There are reasons for believing that genuine unselfishness is possible in children. And yet we are far more likely to err in the endeavor to produce a precocious altruism than we are in recognizing frankly the prevailing selfishness of childhood and leading it to simple co-operations and sharing of goods which may be the basis of later altruistic development. It is interesting that even fighting is regarded by Kirkpatrick as an instinct that must not be too

seriously interfered with, and one which may result in useful lessons.

The great basis for altruistic and moral development is found in the parental instinct, which is regarded as a basis for the social instincts. The educational suggestions here are particularly valuable. The author does not discuss the question of sex hygiene in the schools but lays the emphasis upon frank talks between the parent and child, beginning very early in life.

The chapter on play is of great importance. It is a psychological study on the basis of which may be estimated the practical proposals of the other books which we are to review. Perhaps there is no subject which the church and religious people have understood so little as play. It has been thought of as a more or less inevitable waste of time, or as a peril to be carefully watched, or as a useful sugar-coating for a religious pill. We must recognize the large function of play, "Nature's jolly nurse," in the development of human life. Our author deals in a very excellent way with the development of play from childhood to youth and shows its moral worth as an expression of "law as a means of freedom."

There is a chapter definitely devoted to moral and religious education conceived as a development of the "regulative instinct." Kirkpatrick lays great emphasis upon the marked change in this development at puberty. Up to twelve years of age the moral condition is almost wholly the result of environment and training. At pubescence comes the new possibility of choice between acts for one's self and acts for others. As already indicated, this is perhaps

too hard-and-fast a distinction but the educational suggestions for the transition period are none the less valuable. The treatment of religion is brief but the protest against the intellectualizing of religion in the early education of the Protestant churches is certainly based on a sound psychology.

The later suggestions of this book are of perhaps more concern to the public-school teacher. And yet we do well to take account in our religious education of the problems of the peculiar, defective, abnormal, and exceptional child. And, indeed, if we can ever secure a sufficiently trained body of teachers, our small classes ought to give us an opportunity for individual work which the mass education of the public school does not afford.

A distinguished scholar recently said: "Almost anyone can bring up a child religiously but the serious question arises when adolescence appears." The statement is not to be taken literally but it represents a comparison which is true. A fact of most serious import is that it is just at the beginning of youth that all of the educational agencies lose their hold upon a large majority of the young people. The legal age for leaving school is the time when the boys and girls by thousands fling off the yoke and strike out for freedom. It is just at this time (at about fourteen) that the children who have been so amenable to Sunday-school education become irregular in attendance and drop out because the church has ceased to be of interest to them. And it is at about this same age that the fathers and mothers begin to be concerned because parental control is no longer so easy as it was. It

will not do to say that the youth slip away from us because the religious education of childhood has been inadequate. In many cases there has been an excellent understanding of the boys and girls and a regimen well adapted to their development. But with the coming of youth there are different conditions which it behooves parents and educators to take into account. Failing this, the well-trained child may easily become the careless or vicious or criminal youth.

These manifest conditions have caused a widespread interest in the study of youth. One of the most practical and valuable of these studies is *The Boy Problem*, by Forbush. The suggestions of the book grew out of the practical work of the author as a city pastor in his work with boys. It may be said here parenthetically that a book very much to be desired is upon the girl problem, for those who are engaged in the training of girls realize that the problem of their healthy development is no whit less significant and intricate than that of their brothers. As a matter of fact, we do not know so much about girl psychology. The books on the education of youth are therefore mostly concerned with boys.

Forbush presents a careful study of the social development of boys, with a good deal of dependence on G. Stanley Hall's *Adolescence*. The recognized biological and psychological principles involved in this study are well and popularly set forth. The author accepts the theory that the individual rehearses the race life and builds somewhat fully upon it. This theory has not the vogue that it had a few years ago, and will

doubtless have to be so modified as to leave little of practical educational value in it. But the use of the theory in this book does not in any wise vitiate the main contentions and suggestions which it presents.

A most significant characteristic of boy life is, of course, its social expressions in gangs and societies. There are certain societies of a simpler character that precede puberty and then there is a peculiar social development known as the "gang." Forbush believes that the "gang" is a natural boy development which may be seized and used, if well understood. He has a chapter of criticism of boys' clubs and church work for boys in which he points out the inadequacy and the unsatisfactory character of many attempts that have been made to hold boys because of the failure to realize their needs and interests. The Christian Endeavor Society comes in for trenchant criticism. The constructive chapter on "What the Church May Do for Boys" is full of valuable suggestions. Dr. Forbush is, of course, widely known as the originator of the Knights of King Arthur and he here presents the essential characteristics of the order. He is a thorough believer in some form of chivalric organization to meet the heroic ideals of early adolescence. Simpler societies for younger boys may be organized and that of the Woodcraft Indians is here commended. The book is packed with excellent practical suggestions on such subjects as preparation for church membership, relations of fathers and boys, of pastors and boys, the opportunities of the home and of the public school. It is all in all a healthy and natural appeal for the

good understanding and sane treatment of youth.

A later and most excellent study of boy life in relation to the church is Hoben's *The Minister and the Boy*. The author, an enthusiastic worker with boys in city, college, and country, as also a scientific student of the problem in its normal as well as its pathological aspects, here gives vital suggestions to the minister who would understand his responsibility to the boys of his parish. The book is a plea for the ministry of personal friendship based on genuine understanding of boy life. It holds out to the ministry the opportunity of gaining the love and loyalty of youth as one of the most rewarding of his endeavors.

The work for boys is not to be institutionalized outside of the church, nor is the minister's part to be taken from him by any other organization. If the minister is or can learn to be a leader of boys, his is the place and the church is the field. Of course the work for boys must be done largely outside the traditional limits of church activity, for these have not been established to a great extent in sympathy with youthful interests.

Let one read this book to get the flavor of boy life and the joy of boy leadership. Boys are not here presented as social nuisances who are somehow to be circumvented and kept busy so that they will not do too much harm; they are candidates for manhood, citizenship, Christ-discipleship, the period and character of whose candidacy are intensely interesting and significant. Not that the dangers of rudeness, vulgarity, vice, are here overlooked. The pathos of this easy declension is a motive under-

lying all the discussion. But through it all is the faith that there is a genuineness about youth which makes a virile leadership worth while and holds out largest promise of success.

The book is full of practical suggestions. It deals with boyhood in the village and country and in the city, showing how each may be helped in the local conditions. It discusses scientifically and practically the ethical value of organized play. It supplements the excellent treatment by Forbush of the boys' club in the church. Let the suggestion be especially heeded that the club is not to be used as a bait for Sunday-school attendance or church membership, but is to be a genuine opportunity of good in itself.

The boy's religious life is presented as essentially objective, though with its critical times of subjective experience, these generally centering about a concrete moral problem. The minister is to be respectful in his approach to the inner sanctuary of personality and to beware of the rude intrusion that our common evangelism often employs.

There is a specific phase of the problem of the religious education of youth which must receive serious attention in the coming days. It is that of the so-called questionable amusements. In the three books discussed above considerable emphasis has been placed upon the educational value of play. It is conceded to have a definite biological basis and to be of great significance in the development of life. But what play shall it be? Athletic play, of course, is of the highest value and there is no longer need to argue for its status in our educational schemes. There is only

need that it shall be conducted under such conditions as to make it really educational and to eliminate the various dangers and selfishnesses that easily creep into it. But there is another type of amusement, calling for individual skill, that is of great interest to boys and young men. Specifically, for example, billiards and bowling. What are the churches to do about that? "Beer and skittles" is a collocation of terms from the time when the saloon had its bowling-alley as a matter of course. "Pool-rooms" have an unsavory suggestion of vulgarity, gambling, and drunkenness. The church has quite generally taken a definite attitude of interdiction as regards these and many other youthful indulgences. The whole question will have to be thought out anew in the light of fact and reason. There is not much literature upon the subject as yet. A little book has recently appeared which may serve very well as a basis of discussion. Milnes's *The Church and the Young Man's Game* is a definite plea for the introduction of billiard tables into church basements and parish houses for the purpose of affording healthful and valuable amusement to the young people.

The book is published for the National Indoor Game Association, an organization "to safeguard the young man's leisure hours, to shield him from vice and low ideals, where temptation assails him most, to ameliorate the atmosphere of his favorite games, and to make unwholesome game-rooms clean up or close up by the principle of substitution." It calls attention to the enormous loss of young manhood from the church and attributes it largely to the fact that the church is concerned only with child

interests, and feminine interests, and mature interests. The economic argument is urged of the wastefulness of the expensive church plants kept unused six-sevenths of the time. The game of billiards is analyzed and defended by one who understands it and has seen it played under wholesome conditions. Numerous examples are cited of churches that have greatly increased their hold upon young men by the adoption of this natural appeal to their interests.

A striking phase of the discussion is the suggestion of the enrichment of rural life that may be possible by this means with the result of holding the youth in the country where they might be quite content to stay if only there were "something doing."

The problems of card-playing, dancing, and theater-going are not discussed in this little book. Each of them stands on a different basis, and yet we shall have to consider very wisely and sympathetically the increasing desire of our young people to enjoy these forms of recreation. Can they be made wholesome? Can the good be conserved and the bad eliminated? Can discrimination and good taste be developed? Can we gain more by appreciation than by prohibition? These are urgent questions in religious education that probably are of more importance than a great many of the matters that are engaging the attention of scientific experts and religious workers.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the essential differences between childhood and youth religion?
2. What are the differences between boys and girls in their moral and religious development?

3. How far have the various types of boys' clubs been successful? What are their limitations?

4. What part of his time and energy may the minister devote to the specific leadership of boys?

5. What is the wise co-ordination of the church and the Y.M.C.A. in work for boys and for young men?

6. How far shall we recognize the "gang" in religious education? Is it a fundamental social unit?

7. What attitude shall we take today toward youthful interest in the various popular recreations and amusements?

#### SOME FURTHER WORKS

G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence* (2 vols.), or the shorter work *Youth, Its Education, Regimen, and Hygiene*.

Chamberlain, *The Child*.

Caroline Latimer, *Girl and Woman*.

John L. Alexander, *Boy Training*.

Willson, *The American Boy and the Social Evil*.

Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*.

J. Adams Puffer, *The Boy and His Gang*.

William B. Forbush, *The Coming Generation*.

*Official Handbook, Boy Scouts of America*.

*Official Handbook, Campfire Girls of America*.

## SUGGESTIONS TO LEADERS OF CLASSES USING THE ORIGIN AND TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS<sup>1</sup>

At first glance there would seem to be little unity in the content of the books to be reviewed during the coming month. There is a genuine point of contact in the situation out of which these books arose. They should first be examined by the leader with special reference to what each reflects of the difficulties of the Christians in the post-Pauline period. Close study will also be worth while in order to determine the distinctive interpretations of the principles of Jesus by these early followers. The religious value of these books will lie in a study of the courage and candor with which their writers assailed the evils of their day, and instructed and exhorted their fellow-Christians, and also in our own effort to estimate these interpretations and to reinterpret these same principles of Jesus in the light of modern thought.

In handling the *letters* treated in this period the leader will not meet with pre-

suppositions on the part of the class. The approach to the Book of Revelation, however, must be particularly guarded on account of the superficial familiarity of the group with this book, and the traditional associations which have gathered about it. It is essential that the class approach the study of this unique book with an open mind and the leader should carefully prepare the way for such a condition, by emphasizing the historical situation and discussing the whole question of apocalyptic literature. A careful study of the work of this month is the best possible preparation for the last subject of the course, the Gospel of John and the letters which bear his name.

#### Program I

*Leader:* A brief survey of the great persecutions of the Christians through the centuries and their causes.

*Members:* (1) Selections from First

<sup>1</sup> The suggestions relate to the ninth month's work, the student's material for which appears in the *Biblical World* for May and may be obtained in pamphlet reprints for use with classes. Address: THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE, The University of Chicago.